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'Big D' and 'little d': two types of twenty-first century development?

David Lewis 

Department of Social Policy, London School of Economics & Political Science, London, UK

ABSTRACT

Confusion between the idea of development as purposeful intervention and development as outcome has been addressed by efforts to distinguish 'intentional' from 'immanent' development, and the distinction between 'big D' development as Western post- World War Two modernisation in the Global South, and 'little d' as the creation of winners and losers within unfolding capitalist change. As a heuristic device this distinction has been put to a variety of uses within development studies, but it has rarely been subjected to further scrutiny. This paper asks (1) whether the distinction remains coherent or risks being stretched too far, and (2) whether it remains relevant within the changing landscape of twenty-first century development. It first traces the historical evolution of the distinction, and then presents an exploratory case study of Bangladesh's garment sector in order to analyse the relationship between the two kinds of development empirically, identifying a number of contradictions and ambiguities. It finds that while the 'D/d' distinction remains useful at a general level, further conceptualisation is now needed, and its relevance may fade as the significance of Western aid declines.

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1. Introduction

Although the term is ubiquitous, there are continuing debates about exactly what is meant by 'development'. We might easily agree with Bruce Currie-Alder et al.'s basic definition that development is 'how societies change over time', but this still leaves open important questions of how and why they change.¹ Heinz Arndt helpfully distinguished between two main meanings: development as something that *is done* (and therefore involves intention and choice) and development as something *that happens* (occurring according to some kind of largely predetermined *ex ante* logic).² Confusion arises because the word 'development' is sometimes used to refer to change and its consequences, while other times it refers to the intentions of institutional actors to bring change about. For example, the term may be variously used to refer to broad processes of economic and social transformation, particularly under capitalism; to describe conditions in particular areas or countries and the levels of

CONTACT David Lewis  d.lewis@lse.ac.uk  Department of Social Policy, London School of Economics & Political Science, Houghton St, London, WC2A 2AE, UK

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'progress' that they contain; or simply to refer to the international activities of aid agencies and non-governmental organisations (NGOs).

Two related conceptualisations have been used to try to address this problem. First was Michael Cowen and Robert W. Shenton's historical enquiry into 'the invention of development' as both an idea and as practice, and the ambiguities around its different meanings. They proposed a clearer distinction between development as 'immanent process' and 'intentional practice', having identified the source of the problem as confusion between development as unfolding societal change and development 'as a goal of action'.³ They argued that the concept of intentional development had originally emerged from the recognition during the nineteenth century of 'the essential unity of creation and destruction contained within the process of development', and that it had primarily been conceived as a tool for managing the disorder produced by capitalist transformation, underpinned by a concept of 'trusteeship' that assumed the government's role and good judgment in protecting the welfare of its citizens.⁴

The second conceptualisation was human geographer Gillian Hart's well-known distinction between '*Development*', which she characterised as the conscious efforts of development agencies to intervene and promote positive change, and '*development*', the wider patterns of societal change that produces both winners and losers from struggles around power and resources.⁵ For Hart this distinction was productive because it enabled a more fully historicised analysis of contemporary neoliberal capitalism and global power, and potentially offered insight into how dominant discourses could be challenged and alternative development paths constructed. Hart's 'D/d' distinction was taken up in various ways within development studies. It helped provide a simple framing device for introductory teaching in development, informed debates about theory and practice in development, and it has been used to challenge managerial and technical approaches to development that pay insufficient attention to politics, context and history.⁶ For example, Sharad Chari and Stuart Corbridge describe the post-1945 era as one in which '*Development* was capitalised' and turned into 'something that governments and private companies direct, perhaps in combination with leading global agencies like the World Bank'.⁷ More specifically, the distinction has informed critical work on NGOs where it has been argued that such organisations should work politically to build alliances for structural change within 'little d' processes rather than focus only on ameliorative 'big D' projects.⁸

While the 'D/d' distinction has gained traction, it has been subjected to relatively little further scrutiny. Nor has it been applied empirically. On closer inspection, there are some potential problems. First, there are areas of conceptual ambiguity. For example, while the 'big D' idea captures the way the international aid system imposes policy agendas on dependent countries in the Global South, what about countries whose policy regimes are less connected to the aid system? Second, how are 'little d' and 'big D' development related to each other in practice? For example, if 'big D' or 'little d' are presented as strategic alternatives for NGOs, do we risk dualist thinking that undermines Hart's original conceptualisation of a dialectical relationship between the two types?⁹ The aim of this paper is to reflect on two main questions. The first is whether the utility of the 'D/d' distinction risks being stretched too far beyond simply a general usefulness as a means of organising ideas about development? The second is to ask whether a conceptual distinction that emerged at the turn of the millennium under specific historical conditions can remain relevant in today's changing development landscape?

The first part of the paper traces the evolution of the 'D/d' distinction. The second part explores how far the concept has travelled within development studies and the ways it has been put to use, focusing in particular on discussions of NGOs and civil society. The third part applies the concept to the case of the Bangladesh garment industry in the light of these two questions. This makes it possible to examine ambiguities in the way the relationship between two types is framed, which are analysed in the fifth section. The conclusion then returns to the two central questions. In answer to the first, it finds that the distinction serves as a useful ideal type but becomes less stable when applied empirically. Specifically, it identifies the problem that 'D/d' relationships and goals are ambiguous among actors at the interface where this dialectic unfolds. Second, it suggests with the declining importance of Western aid and the growth of multipolar patterns of global transformation, the utility of the 'D/d' distinction is likely to be reduced.

2. The genealogy of the 'D/d' distinction

A common criticism of development studies is that it is 'depthless and ahistorical'.¹⁰ Cowen and Shenton addressed this problem by examining and reasserting the importance earlier ideas and assumptions that lie behind contemporary debates.¹¹ They suggested that, historically, there have been two main ways of thinking about how societies develop and change: (1) faith in unfolding progress through which societies advance and peoples' lives improve, and (2) the reformist idea of state action to minimise the undesirable consequences of capitalism and bring order to processes of disruptive change. Nineteenth century industrialisation in Europe produced what they identified as a historically specific 'doctrine of development' that linked these two understandings through the principle of 'trusteeship'. This principle was based on the idea of the state managing issues of poverty, urban migration and unemployment, an essentially paternalistic idea that was later extended from the domestic realm into colonial territories.

Cowen and Shenton's thesis was that the modern idea of development emerged originally from the need to manage instability within Europe's rapidly industrialising societies. It referred to state practice intended to counter dislocation brought about by progress: 'it was in Europe that development was first meant to create order out of the social disorder of rapid urbanization, poverty and unemployment'.¹² Influenced by French philosopher August Comte's ideas, development was originally understood as a rational means 'to ameliorate the disordered faults of progress'.¹³ Furthermore, as European empires grew, colonial countries came to see themselves as sufficiently 'developed' that 'they could act to determine the process of development for others deemed less-developed', drawing further on the doctrine of trusteeship as the principal means through which this could be achieved.¹⁴ This understanding has continued to inform contemporary theory and practice, extending a view of development in which the *goal* of development is understood as an expression of policy.

Cowen and Shenton's work also showed that the historical evolution of ideas about development was more complex than was often understood. It highlighted the fact that echoes of these earlier ideas lingered on, rarely acknowledged, within the world of development. For example, they questioned the assumption that US President Truman's famous 1949 presidential speech inaugurated the modern concepts of 'development' and 'underdevelopment', observing that the nineteenth century trusteeship principle could still be seen as informing

contemporary ideas about technology transfer, good governance, local level participation and empowerment.¹⁵ Far from having been discredited as Eurocentric and paternalistic during the era of decolonisation, it had also influenced the establishment of the Bretton Woods institutions and the 1980s policies of 'structural adjustment' imposed on the Global South.¹⁶

Cowen and Shenton also suggested that confusion between the means and goals of development was continuing to create problems for development studies now that earlier distinctions between immanent process and intentional practice had become blurred:

... the question of how actions taken in the name of development relate to any preconceived end of development is unanswered. Furthermore, because development is both means and goal, the final outcome is routinely assumed to be present at the onset of the process of development.¹⁷

Nor was a clear enough distinction usually made, they argued, between a state policy for development and efforts to empower people 'through or indeed against the state' in pursuit of development.

A few years later, Gillian Hart built on Cowen and Shenton's work by creating a related but slightly different conceptualisation: the 'D/d' distinction.¹⁸ In seeking to challenge claims that were increasingly being made during the 1990s by both 'the neoliberal right and the cultural left' that the idea of development was dead (to be replaced respectively either by free market forces or by alternatives brought about by new social movements), she countered by suggesting that development remained a powerful field of ideas and practices characterised by 'multi-layered struggles'.¹⁹ She argued that the best way to understand this was through making a distinction between

'big D' Development defined as a post-second world war project of intervention in the 'third world' that emerged in the context of decolonization and the cold war, and 'little d' development or the development of capitalism as a geographically uneven, profoundly contradictory set of historical processes.²⁰

While there were strong echoes of Cowen and Shenton, Hart's framing went further by drawing on Karl Polanyi's *The Great Transformation* and its critique of what he termed the market society. In particular she drew on his concept of the 'double movement' that served to check the market's expansion. This idea referred to the contradictions that produced forms of resistance such as trade unions, civil society organisations and social movements seeking to reshape capitalism. Polanyi understood this double movement as arising from potentially productive 'countertendencies' contained within capitalism, based on 'the clash of the organising principles of economic liberalism and social protection'.²¹ The resulting contestations revolved around struggles for social protection, such as improved labour standards, equal rights and social justice within the harsh processes of industrialisation and modernisation.

Polanyi had predicted the end of the market model of economy as a result of its tendencies to neglect society and social relationships. After the two World Wars and the Great Depression of the 1930s such a breakdown seemed plausible, but with the emergence of social democracy after 1945 in many capitalist countries it failed to materialise. He had underestimated the capacity of national level policies such as the New Deal and Keynesian state interventionism to maintain stability.²² Nevertheless, his overall analysis of the damage to societies caused by an increased reliance on market models remains persuasive. Polanyi's ideas were

lent a new resonance from the end of the 1970s by the 'neoliberal' policies of Margaret Thatcher and Ronald Reagan that brought a revival of market capitalism and the rolling back of the state. Following the 2008 financial crash, the façade of neoliberalism has been increasingly questioned and resisted: 'furnish[ing] plentiful material for Polanyi's thesis that the neglect of social interests must eventually generate a political backlash and a retreat from market fundamentalism.'²³

Gillian Hart's 'D/d' distinction can also be understood as operating within a specific historical context. She was writing during the post-Cold War 1990s, when structural adjustment policies were being followed by triumphalist proclamations about 'the end of history' and claims about the natural dominance of liberal capitalism and markets. Hart aimed to reclaim the ground from neoliberal globalists by reasserting the role of the developmental state, and by thinking more critically about power, struggle and structure:

The key issue, rather, is the need to confront questions of capitalist development – *not* as unfolding teleology or immanent process, but in terms of the multiple, non-linear, interconnected *trajectories* that are constitutive of what has come, euphemistically, to be termed 'globalization'. Refocusing on 'small d' development, and on non-reductionist understandings of class and power, constitutes a vitally important terrain for intellectual engagement in a world of profound injustice and material inequality.²⁴

Hart's original formulation of the idea was brief and made almost in passing, but she has returned to it several times and developed it further. For example, in a discussion of the South African government's changing attitudes towards development, Hart refers to the distinction to locate her analysis more firmly within a historical political economy perspective.²⁵ The desire to examine the present through a historical analysis of capitalism and development was also in evidence in an *Antipode* article written following the 2008 global financial crisis.²⁶ Here she returned to the idea in her analysis of how changing post-World War Two understandings of development can 'shed light on the conditions in which we now find ourselves'. She now offered the following elaborated definition:

'Big D' Development I define as the multiply scaled projects of intervention in the 'Third World' that emerged in the context of decolonization struggles and the Cold War. 'Little d' development refers to the development of capitalism as geographically uneven but spatially interconnected processes of creation and destruction, dialectically interconnected with discourses and practices of Development.²⁷

This refinement is a helpful one. The fact that interventions are understood as 'multiply scaled' makes clearer the diversity of 'big D' activities, from regional World Bank structural adjustment policies to small-scale NGO local projects. The relationship between the two types of development is also now more explicitly specified as 'dialectically interconnected'. Finally, she also clarifies the historical distinctiveness of 'big D' development as the post-1945 Western international modernisation project that took shape in the contexts of decolonisation and Cold War tensions.²⁸ In this way, her idea differs from Cowen and Shenton's broader view that the idea of 'intentional' development can be historically located in the broader management of change in European modernising and colonising societies.

3. How far has the distinction evolved and contributed to development studies?

While the origin of the 'D/d' distinction is found in historical analyses of development, as briefly discussed earlier, it has also been applied by development scholars in several ways that go beyond this.

The first is its use in helping to broaden understandings of development beyond a narrow view of projects, programmes and policies. For example, Alan Thomas draws on Cowen and Shenton to investigate the problem that development is too narrowly defined as 'what development agencies do' and that 'development practice has come to be the dominant meaning of development'.²⁹ The field of development studies is diverse, with some university departments focusing their research on wider development as transformation, while others – partly driven by resource pressures that can be met by consultancy – pursue more 'applied' research agendas in partnership with development agencies. Thomas is unhappy with a limited view of development as practice, claiming that it obscures development's complexity and ambiguities. Though he does not engage with Hart's distinction explicitly, he draws on Polanyi's refutation of the idea that 'the development of capitalism accords to some kind of natural historical law', and argues instead that 'the conditions for global capitalism have constantly to be promoted by those political forces which favour them'.³⁰ Thomas' argument extends Polanyi's idea of the double movement that operates at the level of states to also include struggles between civil society organisations and corporate interests. The paper can also be read as a contribution to overcoming the earlier 'impasse' faced in development studies, in which scholars concerned with theory and practice found themselves unable to communicate meaningfully with each other.³¹

The 'D/d' distinction has also been used by those who argue that we need to resist purely technical approaches to development by insisting on the need to bring in politics. Conceptions of development intervention that focus only on managing institutional capacity building, service delivery, infrastructure and public administration reform can be understood as reformist interventions that do not address underlying processes of capitalist (or indeed socialist) development, paying insufficient attention to alternative ways of organising political, economic and social relationships. The distinction therefore informs resistance to contemporary pressures towards the narrow 'what works' approach to development – essentially a dominant contemporary framing of 'big D' – that reduces it to measurable local level interventions at the expense of power, politics and structural change. It also has implications for the deepening of development as practice, as for example the argument that development organisations that engage with 'little d' development through lobbying to change the structural causes of poverty and mobilising against injustice have more relevance than those who simply carry out 'big D' in the form of small-scale projects or delivering contracted services on behalf of states and donors.³²

A third application is in relation to the role of NGOs as civil society organisations, where the 'D/d' distinction has helped to frame analysis of the relationship between NGOs and the pursuit of 'alternative' approaches to development. Bebbington et al. see its value as 'offering a means to better clarify relationships between development policy and practice and the underlying processes of uneven development that create exclusion and inequality for many just as they led to enhanced opportunities for others'.³³ Development NGOs have in many cases provided alternative ideas and approaches – such as community level service delivery,

participatory project planning or microfinance – at the level of ‘big D’ interventions. But they have been less ready to contribute more radical alternatives at ‘little d’ level, where the focus needs to be on ‘alternative ways of organising the economy, politics and social relationships in a society’. This, the authors suggest, is partly due to the location of many development NGOs within the broader world of aid and agencies, where they pay insufficient attention to wider political economy and lack critical engagement with the structural questions such engagement would imply. They comment on Cowen and Shenton’s original framework by suggesting that not only is it necessary to distinguish these two different ways of thinking, but also to connect them by addressing ‘the clear, if non-deterministic, relationships between these two dimensions of development’.³⁴

Jonathan Rigg’s reflections on modernisation and development in Southeast Asia offer a further conceptual refinement. Taking the original idea of ‘big D’ as managed economic change in the form of ‘funds, technologies and expert advice, much of it from the rich world’ directed to the poor countries, and ‘little d’ as the ‘historical progress of capitalism’, he goes on to propose two new sub-distinctions within the ‘big D’ category:

In thinking of the different ‘developments’ that exist we can take these distinctions a little further and add two more to the list: superscript development (D^d) and subscript development (D_d). D^d refers to the role played by developmental states in driving and directing development in the Asian region ... This is substantially different from the ‘big D’ development to which Hart refers. D_d on the other hand, relates to the role of NGOs and community organizations in promoting change. This is more usually termed alternative development ... The point of drawing out development typologies in this way is that it helps to contextualize – intellectually – different critiques of development. The post-developmentalists, for example, are usually directed [sic] their ire at ‘big D’ development and see D_d as a possible way out of the development impasse.³⁵

This modification helps make clearer the relationship between the two types of development by distinguishing different tendencies at the point where they intersect. It highlights different forms of ‘big D’ activity and the nature of the dialectic and draws our attention to an interface between the two, where there are entanglements of state, market and civil society. In order to investigate these issues further, the next section applies our analysis of the ‘D/d’ conceptualisation to a brief case study of the garment industry in Bangladesh.

4. The Bangladesh garment industry

The ready-made garment industry in Bangladesh offers a ‘real world’ case in which these two framings of development can be more fully explored. The case is primarily based on secondary sources, but also draws on previous qualitative work by the author.³⁶ It is intended as an ‘exploratory’ case study that enables us to achieve a depth of analysis that might allow a refining and further development of the conceptualisation.³⁷ At the same time, it is acknowledged that application to another country case setting might reveal a different set of issues in relation to the ‘D/d’ concept. The example of Bangladesh is particularly illuminating because it shows clearly how both ‘big D’ and ‘little d’ processes play out, how they each contribute in significant ways to both economic and social development, and how the relationship between them is not straightforward and contains certain contradictions. On the one hand, Bangladesh has long been a country on the receiving end of foreign aid and intensive external development interventions. On the other, Bangladesh’s garment

sector emerged in relatively short period of time to become by far the most dynamic area of the country's economy such that it has 'directly fuelled Bangladesh's development'.³⁸

The modern garment industry in Bangladesh specialises in the manufacture of clothes mainly for Western retailers, and its factories rely mostly on low cost female labour. Worth around US\$7 million in 1982, the sector employed 1.5 million workers by 1999 and contributed three-quarters of Bangladesh's US\$5 billion total exports. By 2017 the garment industry's turnover had risen to an estimated US\$28.1 billion.³⁹ More than half of exports go to the EU, around one-quarter to the US, and the rest to countries such as Canada and Japan. The rise of the garment industry has been described as 'the most remarkable economic development in Bangladesh in the past two decades'.⁴⁰ It has been one of the key drivers of the country's transition from 1970s 'basket case' to achieving in 2015 of the status of 'lower-middle-income country'.⁴¹

The sector's origins date back to the late 1970s, when a handful of factories began producing clothes for Western markets as a consequence of the 1974 Multi-Fibre Arrangement (MFA). This arrangement was put in place by the developed countries in order to protect their clothing manufacturers from growing quantities of cheap imports from developing countries, using strict export quotas. Although the MFA was primarily designed to protect European and North American producers, it also provided opportunities to very poor countries such as Bangladesh.⁴² Under this agreement, it became possible for established garment-producing countries to extend their production by activating the unused export quotas of non-garment producing poor countries. Textile production had once been an important sector during Bengal's pre-colonial past, but there was no pre-existing export garment industry in Bangladesh. It was South Korean capital, a country whose quotas were already filled, that served as the catalyst for the emergence of this new industrial sector.

The dramatic growth of the industry was also driven by cheap labour and low infrastructure costs. Wage rates in Bangladesh have remained among the lowest in the world, and labour force entry requires little formal education or capital requirements. Investors can rent factory space very cheaply. As a result, the country's garments are 40–100% cheaper than Chinese counterparts in European markets and 30–70% cheaper in US markets. Furthermore, domestic policy reform, chiefly the liberalisation of trade, including measures such as the back-to-back 'letter of credit' system⁴³ and bonded warehouse facility,⁴⁴ have been crucial in helping to facilitate sector growth.⁴⁵

Industry growth has generated far-reaching social and economic changes in Bangladesh. By the early 2000s, more than a million women had entered the formal sector industrial workforce in the country's main cities of Dhaka and Chittagong, and today's figure is nearer to four million. This change has taken place despite social norms that have traditionally restricted women's participation in formal labour markets. As Naila Kabeer has pointed out:

it took market forces, and the advent of an export-oriented garment manufacturing industry, to achieve what a decade of government and non-government efforts had failed to do: to create a female labour force of sufficient visibility, and on such a scale, that it could no longer be overlooked by official data gathering exercises.⁴⁶

Increased female participation in the formal labour market has been a major economic factor driving social change. The garment industry has been a key driver of the 'empowerment' of women observed by many agencies within the country since the 1980s. The new garment factories drew mainly on the labour of village women who had learned traditional sewing

skills as young girls within rural households. These generations of young women have been able to challenge the constraints of kin and patriarchal social norms and shape new identities in settings beyond the village. Women report that they value the chance to earn their own living, gain a measure of independent purchasing power, be able to save and remit money to their families in the village, and secure more control over their choice of partner and date of marriage.⁴⁷

Second, the case of the garment industry allows us to focus on the 'big D' dimensions of such changes. The garment sector has been the focus for a wide range of purposive interventions intended to promote positive change, or ameliorate harm, within the 'little d' arena of the industry's development. Economic growth has come at a high social cost. Income and empowerment gains also need to be set against the generally harsh lives faced by garment workers in terms of poor working conditions, a lack of basic labour rights and high levels of violence against women.⁴⁸ Other recent research points to significant health problems for workers, including high levels of stress and anxiety.⁴⁹ 'Big D' responses have included charitable welfare projects by NGOs such as women's health services in the form of health and nutrition training schemes, and the provision of childcare centres for garment worker children.

For example, Nari Uddug Kendra (NUK) is a local NGO that has for more than 15 years undertaken advocacy with and provided services to garment workers. It works with factory management to draw up action plans that meet industry compliance standards in relation to fire safety and toilets facilities, provides hostels that offer employees secure low-cost dormitory accommodation, and trains workers in health, nutrition and gender rights. Phulki is another local organisation that runs day care centres for the children of garment workers, based on a self-designed model that has now been replicated by other local groups.⁵⁰ Contrasting with these types of welfare-oriented projects, there are also various rights-based civil society initiatives. These have included lobbying work in an attempt to raise labour standards, advocacy to improve transparency in international value chains, awareness training in relation to worker rights, and support for building workplace arrangements that can improve communication and strengthen dialogue between workers and managers.

Other forms of 'big D' intervention have originated in the for-profit business sector in the form of 'corporate social responsibility' and 'ethical business' initiatives. These follow from private sector claims that business wants to respond to social and environmental needs through the implementation of special programmes that go beyond its central 'for profit' motivation. These types of initiatives became more common following the horrific collapse of the Rana Plaza garment factory in 2013 that led to the death of 1134 factory workers and more than 2500 injuries. The tragedy received considerable international news coverage and brought the position of Bangladesh's garment workers to the world's attention as never before.

Clothing companies renewed and signalled their desire to pay more attention to the safety of garment workers and promised to improve transparency and accountability in the complex supply chains that structure garment exports. Two international industry coalitions were established to improve building and fire safety standards in Bangladesh's factories on a voluntary basis, with European producers such as Primark and H&M signing up to the Accord on Fire and Building Safety (AFBS) (bringing a stricter inspection regime in more than 1600 factories), and many of the US companies choosing to sign up with a different inspection group called the Alliance for Bangladesh Worker Safety (ABWS). However, these efforts

have been far from effective. Three years after the collapse, it was reported that progress with the reforms has remained piecemeal and slow, with for example 70% of the AFBS group's plans still behind schedule at the time of writing.⁵¹

By the end of 2017 these initiatives had run their course, reflecting the shifting balance of local and international interests. The Alliance stated that it would cease its activities by the end of 2018, and that safety-related activities would be taken over by a government scheme.⁵² By contrast, those behind the Accord announced that they would initiate a second phase beginning in 2019. The Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA), the country's leading business association, opposed the decision as externally driven and unaccountable. Its leader made a provocative comparison with the unilateralism of the British East India Company during the eighteenth century and, after additional government criticism, the High Court in late 2017 placed a freeze on the extension of the Accord. As a result of this pressure plans for the second phase of the Accord have now been abandoned. In its place, a new government scheme – known as Shonman (meaning 'respect' in the Bangla language) – is to be organised by the Office of the Prime Minister with an independent ombudsman and participation from the International Labour Organization (ILO). Supporters of the new initiative claim it will be superior to the earlier ones, since it will broaden to include the majority of factories that were not covered. Its critics are sceptical about its viability, since there is no clear plan in place to pay for it.⁵³

Finally, in line with Polanyi's concept of the 'double movement', the garment sector is the focus of bottom-up forms of contestation and resistance and has long been an arena of political mobilisation. Formal trade union membership is restricted, so this has normally taken the form of small-scale protests that have occasional erupted into larger street level demonstrations and unrest. Work by Naomi Hossain and others posits a continuum between such everyday resistance around issues such as workplace lunch bills, housing rental fees, and water and gas supply charges levied in living quarters, through to larger-scale campaigns for increases in the monthly minimum wage that have resulted in regular strikes, stoppages and factory closures.⁵⁴ Between 2008 and 2010 a series of informal worker protests for higher wages led to large-scale unrest that met with political violence in support of owners, constituting one of the most significant examples of class-based mobilisation in the country for many years. The government eventually responded with a significant increase in the garment worker minimum wage in recognition of the political claims made. This type of action can be analysed in terms of a contestation of 'little d' development within 'big D' in Hart's sense of embodying 'non-reductionist understandings of class and power',⁵⁵ and seen as distinct from, and in some ways challenging, other forms of charitable or ameliorative 'big D' projects described above.

In the short term, such action is unlikely to lead to structural transformation or re-articulation of the kind hoped for in Hart's analysis or Polanyi's double movement. As Hossain points out, the country's plentiful supply of garment labour means that the 'industry is insulated against pressures for welfare standards and skills in the short term'.⁵⁶ With a monthly minimum wage of US\$68, Bangladesh's garment workers nevertheless remain the lowest-paid in the world, with their counterparts in China earning US\$280. Pressures for improved working conditions and labour standards that have been taking place since the late 2000s and the increased media visibility given to recent factory fires and collapses continues to provide stronger bargaining power for workers seeking to influence the material interests of employers through growing recognition of labour rights and factory safety. By 2013

garment worker wages had trebled in less than five years, as the government recognised that the political settlement on which its power rested required an adjustment in response to actual and threatened instability.

The garment industry in Bangladesh is at the centre of a rapid and harsh reshaping of the country's social order through an unfolding process of capitalist transformation, that has parallels with the processes of industrialisation in nineteenth century Europe. Here we can identify both 'big D' and 'little d' development, but rather than existing as distinct realms they are heavily entangled. For example, it was regulatory policy at the international level that opened the door to this transformation with the creation of the MFA (with these policies bringing both intended and unintended outcomes for Bangladesh) and the consequent movement of (initially) South Korean capital into the country, but the capitalist growth and transformation that was unleashed is primarily a form of 'immanent' development that remains largely unregulated. In line with Polanyi's 'double movement' idea, cases of garment worker self-organisation, resistance and street protest reflect a set of contradictions as the newly dominant market principle erodes the social norms and institutions among a workforce had been firmly embedded in rural village society a little more than a single generation ago.

The government's oversight of the garment industry can be understood in the light of Rigg's superscript D^d as the 'driving and directing' of the development state, in view of its centrality to the country's export earnings and economic wellbeing. It can also be viewed as an example of the 'trusteeship' principle. The government knows that in order to maintain stability and ensure its own survival it must balance two sets of interests: it must pay close attention to the garment factory owner lobby and to the interests of foreign capital, but it must also take care to maintain a vision of minimum standards for workers in order to prevent instability and maintain order in the midst of rapid industrialisation and urbanisation. Indeed, something close to the 'trusteeship' principle was invoked in an August 2017 speech by Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina when she reminded factory owners to pay more attention to the welfare of their employees, blamed NGOs for sowing dissent in the labour market, and urged the country's garment workers to 'not give in to the provocations of outsiders to cause workplace troubles'.⁵⁷ At the same time, the government's gradual clampdown on wider civil society space is also being used to reinforce this trusteeship by making it harder for opposition to organise.⁵⁸

5. The 'D/d' relationship as binary, continuum or dialectic?

As an ideal or pure type, in Max Weber's sense of capturing the most rational and essential components of a social category, the 'D/d' distinction has conceptual value because it clarifies two different ways of understanding development, and provides a historicised framework for their analysis. However, when it comes to specifying the relationship between them, the case study suggests that there is less clarity. The relational aspect of the conceptualisation has received much less attention, and this section explores ways of thinking about the 'D/d' boundary, the relationship between the two dimensions and the role of policy at the interface of this relationship. Indeed, should we be speaking of two types of development or of two dimensions of the same process?

One implication of making a 'D/d' distinction is that from a certain perspective they could be understood in binary terms as alternatives. This follows from the argument that if NGOs are to be more relevant, effective and sustainable, they need to focus on 'little d' rather than 'big D', implying an 'either/or' choice. Yet if we make too clear a distinction between 'big D' and 'little d', this could underplay the importance of the relationship between them. In Hart's framing, it is clear that 'big D' serves the interests of 'little d'. For example, the 'big D' activities of international and local NGOs that provide welfare to workers in the form of such as child-care support, for example, underpins the work of international capital by ameliorating working conditions for low paid garment workers, diffusing dissent and maintaining the country's position as provider of cheap labour.

Nor is it the case that 'little d' change simply unfolds according to a natural capitalist logic, since it is also subject to governance arrangements. In Bangladesh, international capital sought opportunities to operate and expand within the changing structures of the international regulatory system during the 1970s and 1980s. Despite the elements of contingency and chance that were undoubtedly involved in its early years, global trade regulations conditioned the international movement of this capital. A clear distinction between 'big D/little d' breaks down in the sense once we recognise that there have been strong elements of intentionality – on the part of government and capital – associated with the state's nurturing of the garment industry in Bangladesh. Development and change may be in some importance sense an immanent process, but its patterns are also outcomes of the tensions between 'top-down' forces in the shape of international and national level policies, and 'bottom-up' forces of resistance and contention that bubble up from below.⁵⁹

The risk of a dualist perspective makes it more difficult not only to think in terms of interconnectedness, but also in terms of systems. Unless we focus on the relationship between the two types of development, we might face the kinds of problems with the 'D/d' distinction that emerged in the context of the concept of the 'informal sector' in the 1970s, first conceived by Keith Hart as part of an ILO study.⁶⁰ The concept was soon recognised for its general utility, but once it was mapped onto other empirical realities and subjected to further theoretical scrutiny it began to attract criticism. For example, Jan Breman took the view that 'by interpreting the relationship to the formal sector in a dualistic framework and in focusing on the mutually exclusive characteristics, we lose sight of the unity and totality of the productive system.'⁶¹ The concept has lived on in a general abstract sense, but it was not long before 'the static dualist expression of two sectors, formal and informal, coexisting next to, but not with, each other was relegated firmly to the past.'⁶²

Another potentially productive perspective on the Bangladesh case might suggest the value of a focus on the 'big D' and 'little d' relationship as a continuum. This would suggest points where they meet and interact, generating relationships and tensions from which change emerges in any given setting at a particular time. Development sociologist Norman Long's actor-oriented approach offers a concept of 'interface' that could provide a methodology for analysing interactions and tensions among actors with multiple interests and rationalities.⁶³ Originally conceived as a means for analysing 'development intervention' (in the sense of 'big D'), it could also be used to analyse the interconnectedness between both types. A related inference is made by Bakker and Nooteboom when they note that, 'The "little d-development" approach ... brings relational, unintended and bottom-up factors into the process of development that "big D-development" seeks to control.'⁶⁴

This interface can also be approached through the broad conceptual lens of 'policy'. Policy can be analysed not simply as something instrumental and imposed, but also as an arena of struggle.⁶⁵ It can be understood as encompassing different scales, from the maintenance of global regulation regimes to the implementation regimes that exist at the 'lower' level of project or programme. The framing of policy as part of an interface between 'D/d' then makes it possible to pay more nuanced attention to the relationships between and within states, markets and citizens and to forms of contestation that are taking place. Such a view helpfully blurs the boundary between activities undertaken within the aid and agency worlds of 'big D', and those carried out by governments and corporate actors. The logic of separation between 'big D' and 'little d' as unfolding change becomes less stable, making the interactions across the 'D/d' divide clearer, where they are revealed as related *dimensions* of development rather than different types.

Bringing in the idea of policy as an arena of ideas and actions also makes it possible to focus more clearly on the state. A key element in understanding the relationship between 'big D' and 'little d' is the capacity of the state to develop and implement its strategies in the face of global pressures and historically constituted local institutions. The capacity of the state itself to undertake effective policy can be therefore understood not only as part of 'big D', but also in part as an outcome of 'little d' development. For example, Theda Skocpol has drawn attention to the 'challenging task of explaining the various capacities of states to implement their policies' since these are shaped not just by the state officials who undertake goal formation but also by wider structural conditions, unforeseen reactions and unintended consequences. Such capacities are unevenly distributed across countries, regions and socio-political sectors. In other words, 'little d' development processes come into play under conditions in which there are 'the broad institutional patterns of divergent national histories that explain why countries now have, or do not have, policy instruments for dealing with particular problems or crises.'⁶⁶

While it is productive to explore binary and continuum perspectives on the 'D/d' relationship, we cannot lose sight of Hart's original framing of this as dialectic, in the sense of 'the opposition of contradictory or opposite forces.'⁶⁷ The main value of this conceptualisation is not that it offers choices to development agencies, but that it insists on a focus on struggles for alternative development. 'Big D' is intended to serve the interests of 'little d', but is resisted. Although 'big D' operates with a 'depoliticizing intent' (in the sense used by James Ferguson),⁶⁸ Hart concludes her analysis of post-apartheid South Africa with the hope that resistance will create 'a revitalized politics to press for greater economic justice to realise the promises of democracy.'⁶⁹ This chimes too with Cowen and Shenton's call for alternative development approaches based on 'the refusal of trusteeship'.⁷⁰

6. Conclusion

This paper began by considering the problem of confusion around different understandings of development as both intention and outcome, identified in the work of Cowen and Shenton and that of Gillian Hart. By distinguishing between two types of development, and by historicising the idea of development itself, the 'D/d' distinction has served as a useful heuristic device. It has proved durable in development studies in part because it is a practical framing concept, and in part because it has appealed to multiple constituencies, from

theorists focused on alternatives to neoliberalism, to practitioners seeking to improve the relevance of NGO work. Yet the distinction poses problems when subjected to more detailed scrutiny and applied to a 'real world' case. The context of the Bangladesh garment industry highlights the ways 'big D' and 'little d' processes operate alongside each other, and the way the principle of trusteeship continues to inform government policy in the face of resistance and contention.

Returning our two original questions, how should we now proceed? The first question was whether the original utility of the 'D/d' distinction risks becoming stretched and losing coherence as a means of organising ideas about development? It certainly continues to be valuable by enabling a clearer focus on the politics of struggle and contestation around the post-1945 Western project of development in a general sense. But when applied empirically, problems become apparent. Despite its value in general terms as an ideal type, on closer scrutiny the relationship between 'big D' and 'little d' lacks clarity. One area where this is the case is the messy interface at the point where the two dimensions of development meet. The refinement provided by Rigg partly, though not completely, solves this problem by drawing attention to the point where developmental state meets bottom-up grassroots action. Another problem is how we should best understand the boundary between the aid system and policy more widely. 'D/d' goals become ambiguous among different actors as the dialectic between them unfolds. Two further insights emerge from this: the potential value of a concept such as Long's 'interface' as a means for analysing such interactions, and the need for a critical understanding of *policy* as an arena of contestation around 'D/d' that enables us to go beyond aid and agencies to encompass local and international relationships around state and capital.

The second question was whether a conceptual distinction that emerged under specific historical conditions at the turn of the millennium can remain relevant today? As we move well beyond the period during which Hart was originally writing, its historicised approach to development is both a strength and a potential weakness. The mode of 'big D' operation is changing, with a marked shift in recent years among Western governments to move foreign aid 'upstream'. For example, in 2013 the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) was closed, signalling a move away from the world of projects and programmes towards a view of development as the pursuit of broader foreign policy, trade and commercial interests.⁷¹ A similar trend has been observed in the UK, where foreign aid has become more closely linked with security and immigration. For example, Prime Minister Theresa May announced in 2018 that British aid would be used more explicitly to deepen trade ties with Africa through increased investment.⁷² A different form of self-interested 'big D' now seeks to influence 'little d' in new ways that move beyond the older mode of trusteeship.

Furthermore, the global balance of power in which Western dominance has been taken for granted has altered. The end of 'big D' development in Hart's sense as Western hegemony may already have taken place. Western foreign aid is of decreasing importance to all but a few countries of the Global South. The possibility of rebalancing 'big D' development into a less Western and more 'global' project inclusive of a wider range of countries, ideas and approaches is becoming more real. The rise of China as a key player in development assistance is an important part of this story. Finally, the UN's Sustainable Development Goals, unlike the Millennium Development Goals they replaced, are now to be applied to the rich 'developed' nations as well as the Global South, extending the idea of 'Development' well beyond its post-World War Two usage.

In order to keep up with these changes, some suggest that we now need a universal framing of development in which the 'structural prejudiced framing of development as a North–South issue needs to be removed' and 'reframed from narrowly tackling poverty and vulnerability, to navigating complex challenges in ways that reduce inequalities and build more sustainable, inclusive and secure futures for people and societies'.⁷³ As we experience this transition, the 'D/d' distinction will continue to highlight the continuing vulnerability of certain countries and regions that remain disproportionately subject to the interventions of Western 'big D' development actors, but overall the traction of the 'D/d' distinction has weakened.

Trends in development move backwards as well as forwards. While these global shifts are taking place, we are also witnessing a return to a variant of the 1950s 'development as modernisation' paradigm, for example, in the form of 'the conflation of GDP with development, the focus on energy and transport infra-structures, agro-industrial productivity, resource extraction and, for some, an optimistic sense of forward momentum'.⁷⁴ China's increasing prominence as an aid donor also contributes to this trend, as does its establishment of the new Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB). A view of development as primarily an economic and technical process in which access to markets can be facilitated for marginalised groups, rather than as a process dominated by structural inequalities which requires redistributive outcomes, is a growing cause for concern.⁷⁵ In the light of such regressive shifts, Hart's original motivation for advocating the 'D/d' distinction retains its relevance as citizens attempt to shape neoliberal globalism in support of more equitable and sustainable forms of development based on a deeper understanding of global and local political economy.

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Notes on contributor

David Lewis is professor of social policy and development at the London School of Economics and Political Science. His books include *Anthropology and Development: Challenges for the 21st Century* (with Katy Gardner, 2015), *Nongovernmental Organizations, Management and Development* (2014), *Bangladesh: Politics, Economy and Civil Society* (2011) and *Development Brokers and Translators: The Ethnography of Aid and Agencies* (2006, with David Mosse).

Notes

1. Currie-Alder et al., "State of Development Thought," 13.
2. Arndt, "Economic Development."
3. Cowen and Shenton, "The Invention of Development," 28.
4. Ibid., viii.
5. Hart, "Development Critiques in the 1990s."
6. Willis, *Theories and Practices of Development*; Thomas, "Development as Practice"; Hickey and Mohan, "Relocating Participation."
7. Chari and Corbridge, "Introduction to Part 1," 3.
8. Bebbington et al., "Introduction."
9. Hart, "Development Critiques in the 1990s."
10. Chari and Corbridge, "Introduction to Part 1," 6.
11. Cowen and Shenton, *Doctrines of Development*.
12. Cowen and Shenton, "The Invention of Development," 29.
13. Cowen and Shenton, *Doctrines of Development*, 6.
14. Cowen and Shenton, "The Invention of Development," 28.
15. Cowen and Shenton, *Doctrines of Development*.
16. Ibid.
17. Cowen and Shenton, "The Invention of Development," 28.
18. Hart, "Development Critiques in the 1990s."
19. Ibid., 650.
20. Ibid.
21. Polanyi, *The Great Transformation*, 134.
22. Hart and Hann, "Introduction."
23. Ibid., 8.
24. Hart, "Development Critiques in the 1990s," 655.
25. Hart, "Beyond Neoliberalism."
26. Hart, "D/developments after the Meltdown."
27. Ibid., 119.
28. Ibid.
29. Thomas, "Development as Practice," 778.
30. Ibid., 783.
31. Booth, "Marxism and Development Sociology."
32. Bebbington et al., "Introduction"; Banks and Hulme, "New Development Alternatives."
33. Ibid., 5.
34. Ibid., 5.
35. Rigg, *Southeast Asia*, 328.
36. Author interviews with garment workers, factory managers and civil society groups, 2005 and 2017.
37. Gerring, "What is a Case Study?"
38. Brennan and Connelly, "Battered Bangladesh Risks Everything."
39. Ibid.
40. Kochanek, "The Growing Commercialization," 154.
41. Hossain, *The Aid Lab*.
42. Lewis, *Bangladesh*.
43. A transaction involving an intermediary between the buyer and seller, such as a broker, which overcomes the problems in determining the reliability of contracting parties.
44. A secure area for the purpose of storing or manufacturing dutiable goods without having to pay duty.
45. Selim, *Ecological Modernization*.
46. Kabeer, *The Power to Choose*, 69.
47. World Bank, *Whispers to Voices*.
48. Kabeer, *The Power to Choose*.

49. Naved and Akhter, "Empowering Bangladesh's Garment Workers."
50. Sommerrock, *Social Entrepreneurship Business Models*.
51. Chandran, "Three Years after Rana Plaza Disaster."
52. Preuss, "Bangladesh Alliance Looking for a Successor Organization."
53. Brennan and Connelly, "Battered Bangladesh Risks Everything."
54. Hossain, "The Significance of Unruly Politics."
55. Hart, "Development Critiques in the 1990s," 655.
56. Hossain, *The Aid Lab*, 64.
57. bdnews24.com, "Hasina Asks Garment Factory Owners."
58. Lewis and Hossain, *Revisiting the Local Power Structure*.
59. Tilly and Tarrow, *Contentious Politics*.
60. Hart, "Informal Income Opportunities."
61. Breman, "A Dualistic Labour System?"
62. Siegmann and Schiphorst, "Understanding the Globalizing Precariat."
63. Long, *Development Sociology*.
64. Bakker and Nooteboom, "Anthropology and Inclusive Development," 63.
65. Shore and Wright, "Conceptualizing Policy."
66. Skocpol, *Bringing the State Back In*, 15–16, 18.
67. Williams, *Keywords*, 92.
68. Ferguson, *The Anti-Politics Machine*.
69. Hart, "Beyond Neoliberalism."
70. Cowen and Shenton, *Doctrines of Development*, xv.
71. Levitz, "Canada's International Aid Agency to Close."
72. Roelf, "Britain Will Use Aid Budget."
73. Aghajanian and Allouche, "Introduction," 5–6.
74. Mawdsley, "Development Geography 1," 114.
75. Banks and Hulme, "New Development Alternatives."

ORCID

David Lewis  <http://orcid.org/0000-0003-0732-9020>

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